

ORM NEWS

Office of Resolution Management
Department of Veterans Affairs

www.va.gov/orm



**"Honoring and Serving our Nation's Veterans by Promoting
Discrimination-free Environments"**

July 2005

From the Deputy Assistant Secretary



Certified Mediators

One of our major goals this year is to increase the number of certified mediators in VA. This is a key ingredient in the successful expansion of the use of mediation throughout the Department. The aim is to have certified mediators available at both the facility and agency-wide levels.

Standardizing the certification process, to ensure VA employees meet established mediation certification requirements, is part of this process. VA employees must meet Equal Employment Opportunity Commission requirements for mediating EEO complaints, in addition to other certification requirements.

ORM has a pool of certified mediators to assist VA organizations. To date, there are twenty-two ORM employees, who have been certified, with another ten whose applications are pending certification. We are also working on agreements with each of the Administrations to provide mediation training and certification for their employees so that they can serve as mediators for VA employees.

Certification permits us to offer VA employees the highest quality mediation services available while ensuring VA certified mediators meet recognized standards of excellence.

James S. Jones

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Great Job Done

Employee Recognition Program



ORM field employees who received both high response rates and high overall satisfaction ratings on surveys from their customers for the services they provided are recognized in the Great Job Done Recognition Program.

As with last quarter's recipients, employees who received at least 37% response rates with overall ratings of 85% or higher are recognized as "Go the Extra Smile" recipients. Employees with 25% response rates and overall ratings of 80% or higher are recognized as "You Make the Difference" recipients.

The following employees are recognized for their efforts for the second quarter of FY05:

"Go the Extra Smile"			
Customer satisfaction rate of 85% or higher with a 37% or higher response rate.			
Office Code	Name	Customer Satisfaction Rating	Customer Response Rate
WO	Kimberly Martinez	100%	50%
SEO	Brenda Smith	100%	43%
SEO	Karen Greene	100%	40%
WO	Willy Jenkins	100%	38%
"You Make the Difference"			
Customer satisfaction rate of 80% or higher with a 25% or higher response rate.			
GLO	Maurice Holman	100%	33%
NEO	Jeannine Burton	100%	25%
WO	Herbert Wilkins	100%	25%
MSO	Jo Ann Blackmon	100%	25%

We want to remind all employees to encourage their customers to complete and return the customer satisfaction surveys upon receipt. These surveys are designed to gather data and feedback on the services we provide. For more information, contact the Customer Service Division. ■



10 Reasons to Mediate

The following “10 Reasons to Mediate” were prepared by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). EEOC has also made available to the public a free video “10 Reasons to Mediate” on the national mediation program. For more information, go to EEOC’s Web site www.eeoc.gov.

1. Mediation is free.

Mediation is available at no cost to the parties.

2. Mediation is fair and neutral.

Parties have an equal say in the process and they, not the mediator, decide the terms of the settlement. There is no determination of guilt or innocence in the process.

3. Mediation saves time and money.

Mediation usually occurs early in the charge process, and many mediations are completed in one meeting. Legal or other representation is optional but not required.

4. Mediation is confidential.

All parties sign a confidentiality agreement. Information disclosed during mediation will not be revealed to anyone, including EEOC investigative or legal staff.

5. Mediation avoids litigation.

Mediation costs less than a lawsuit and avoids the uncertainty of a judicial outcome.

6. Mediation fosters cooperation.

Mediation fosters a problem-solving approach to complaints and workplace disruptions are reduced. With an investigation, even if the charge is dismissed by EEOC, underlying problems may remain, affecting others in the workforce.

7. Mediation improves communication.

Mediation provides a neutral and confidential setting in which the parties can openly discuss their views on the underlying dispute. Enhanced communication can lead to mutually satisfactory resolutions.

8. Mediation helps to discover the real issues in your workplace.

Parties share information, which can lead to a better understanding of issues affecting the workplace.

9. Mediation allows you to design your own solution.

A neutral third party assists the parties in reaching a voluntary, mutually beneficial resolution. Mediation can resolve all issues important to the parties, not just the underlying legal dispute.

10. With mediation, everyone wins.

An independent survey showed 96% of all respondents and 91% of all charging parties, who used mediation, would use it again. ■

Privacy Protection

Recently there have been several occurrences where ORM employees have inadvertently disclosed protected personal information in the performance of their duties. This is a reminder of the responsibility ORM employees have to ensure that the privacy of the people we serve is protected.

How do you know what information is protected? If you answer yes to any of the following questions, the information should be considered sensitive. Does the information relate to an individual's:

- Social Security information?
- Medical history?
- Personnel profile (home address/telephone number)?
- Salary?
- Identification codes (user IDs)?
- Terms of employment (performance/disciplinary records)?
- Academic/education history?
- Arrest/criminal investigation history?
- Employment history (general or security clearance information)?

ORM has an official policy on the release of information from EEO files that has been made available to all employees. Steps have also been taken to ensure employees have received Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act training. In addition, reminders on privacy protection have periodically been provided in ORM News and in a memorandum, "Privacy Protection and Awareness," dated February 12, 2004, to all ORM employees from Deputy Assistant Secretary Jones. Employees are, again, encouraged to familiarize themselves with Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act requirements and to ensure that personal information contained in complaint and other files is not improperly disclosed.

Information in complaint files and any other official ORM documents are disclosed on a "need to know" basis only. The casual release or sharing amongst employees of information from these records or documents, for other than work related "need to know" reasons is a violation of the Privacy statutes and the offender could be subjected to disciplinary action, which could include civil penalties. Employees have a responsibility to protect the privacy of records and documents. This applies even if you are not the originator of the improper disclosure of the protected information but are made aware of the improper disclosure. Employees should immediately notify their Field Manager or their designee, of any improper disclosure so that steps can be taken to immediately address the situation.



Travel Tips

By Barbara Scott, ORM Budget Office

Update Your Zegato Travel Information

It is very important that you periodically update your "Profile Information" in Zegato. There are many reasons for updating this information. They include:



- New card issued with a different expiration date.
- New card issued due to a lost or stolen card - new card number and new expiration date required.
- No longer have a government issued card. Enter personal credit card information.
- Work information or telephone number change.
- Bank accountant information change.
- Home address change.

How do you make the necessary changes?

1. Go into Zegato,
2. Go into Organizer,
3. Click on "User Profile," and
4. Enter the new information that applies to each screen.

For more information, contact Barbara Scott at (202) 501-2817. ■

Office Notes

DAS Visits Mid-South Operations

Mr. James S. Jones, DAS for ORM, visited Mid-South Operations headquarters in Little Rock, AR on June 27, 2005 and June 28, 2005 as part of his annual field office visits. He met with Field Office and Customer Service Division employees and managers. He also met with Regional Council and the Assistant Director of the Little Rock VA Regional Office. His next visit will be to Southeastern Operations in Bay Pines, FL in July.

In addition to Mr. Jones' visit, R. Allen Pittman, Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration, also visited Little Rock, AR on June 27, 2005. During his visit he met with Mid-South Operations employees, officials of the Little Rock National Cemetery, and the Associate Director and management officials of the VA Regional Office in Little Rock.

National Team Leaders Visit ORM

Headquarters

Michelle McNeill, **Daniel Spilsbury**, and **Pamela Johnson** spent the week of June 27, 2005, at ORM headquarters in Washington, DC, as part of their orientation for their new positions as National Team Leaders for Intake Specialists, Investigators, and Counselors.

New Employees

Please join us in welcoming **Jeanette Anderson**, Acting HR Manager, who is on a temporary assignment with ORM.

ORM's Budget Office is pleased to announce a new member to their staff. **Nathan C. White, Jr.** joined ORM on July 11, 2005, as a Budget Analyst. Nathan comes to us from the Anne Arundel County Economic Opportunity Committee (EOC), Incorporated, where he worked as a fiscal officer. He will be the budget representative for Western, Northeastern, and Central Plains Operations.

Jennifer Hawrylcw, formerly with the Bedford Satellite Office, joins the Chief Operating Officer's staff as an Administrative Assistant.

Office Notes continued on the next page.

Southeastern Operations

On June 23, 2005, **Diana Ford**, EEO Investigator, Southeastern Operations, graduated from the VISN 8 "Competency Development for Leaders in the 21st Century Training Program." Diana was one of sixty-nine participants to complete this six month program based on the High Performance Development Model (HPDM). The accompanying photo shows Ms. Ford (center) at her graduation ceremony with Bill Low,



EEO Regional Manager, and George Gray, VISN 8 Network Director. Ms. Ford was also recently appointed by the Mayor of St. Petersburg, FL, and approved by the St. Petersburg City Council, to serve on the cities' Human Relations Review Board.

On May 7, 2005, employees, **John Henley**, **Denise Leftridge**, **Brenda Smith** (her daughter, Jasmine), **Ricky Rowe** (his wife Renee and daughter, Kelsey), and **Diana Ford**, volunteered for the annual City of St. Petersburg, Weed and Seed Family Fun Day. This is an annual event with emphasis on community and family. This event has been adopted by staff at the Bay Pines Office and has become an annual labor of love. Diana's sister, Janis Ford, Coordinator for the Weed and Seed Program, extended her thanks and gratitude for the continued support and hard work from these dedicated volunteers.

Mid-Atlantic Operations Employee Recognized for Adopting Six Children

Lynn Smith, EEO Investigator with the Washington, DC Field Office, and his family were the guests of honor on June 25, 2005, at the "Black Tie Inaugural Banquet" for "African American Adoptions, Inc," the first African American adoption agency in the State of Virginia. Lynn and his wife, Gailand, were recognized for adopting six brothers and sisters, all from the same family. They have a total of eight children including another son and daughter. Guests at the banquet included Governor Mark Warner of Virginia.

Office Notes continued on the next page.

Root Cause Reports

The Office of Policy and Compliance has recently released its updated "Root Cause Report" to each of the Administrations. This report is designed to help managers identify to the causes of complaints and address issues that can improve communication, morale, and the workplace environment. It contains revised root cause definitions as well as other pertinent root cause information identified by Administration, VISN, MISN, and local facilities. For more information, contact the Office of Policy and Compliance at (202) 501-2680.

Government Service Recognition

Congratulations to each of the following ORM employees who reached significant milestones in their government service in 2005 and have not been previously recognized in ORM News.

Daniel Spilsbury	Investigator Team Leader	15 years
Marjorie McNutt	Investigator	15 years
Timothy Helke	Intake Specialist	15 years
Jacqueline Velez	Counselor	15 years
Susan Epting	C2 Intake Specialist/Investigator	20 years
Pamel Grosdidier	C1 Investigator/Counselor	20 years
Estrella Morada	Intake Specialist	20 years
Lydia Ward-Nash	Counselor	25 years
Brenda Smith	Investigator	25 years
Deborah Sorrell	Intake Specialist	25 years
Alycia Tirado	Intake Specialist	25 years
Delia Reyes	Intake Specialist	30 years
Allen Mitchell III	Counselor	30 years
Rodger Evans	Intake Specialist	30 years
John Henley	Investigator	30 years
Iceola Gillom	Investigator	30 years
Jim Cameron	Investigator	35 years
Annie Fontenet	Administrative Officer	35 years

Did You Know?



Happy Anniversary VA!

July 21, 2005, marks VA's 75th anniversary of service to America's veterans and their families. VA facilities across the country are hosting special anniversary events throughout the year to commemorate VA's diamond jubilee.

To mark this anniversary, VA Secretary Jim Nicholson hosts the 75th anniversary kickoff observance at D.A.R. Constitution Hall near the White House on July 21, 2005. Nearly 3,000 employees, veterans and VIPs are expected to attend.

Future activities during the year will include a Capitol Hill event, special 75th anniversary programs on Veterans Day 2005 and Memorial Day 2006, and anniversary events at VA facilities throughout the Nation. President Herbert Hoover formally created the Veterans Administration on July 21, 1930, by consolidating the U.S. Veterans' Bureau, the National Homes for Disabled Soldiers and the Bureau of Pensions into the Veterans Administration. On March 15, 1989, President Ronald Reagan elevated VA to a Cabinet-level agency – the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Get the inside scoop on VA's year-long 75th anniversary celebration at VA's new Diamond Jubilee web site -- <http://www.75anniversary.va.gov> or click on the special anniversary link on VA's Internet home page.

VA Central Office





VA Offers Tips on Summer Heat

Summer heat waves often produce high temperatures that can last for days or weeks. The Department of Veterans Affairs advises that when participating in outdoor activities in the heat and humidity, be on the lookout for signs of heat-related stress or heat exhaustion. Symptoms include heavy sweating, paleness, muscle cramps, tiredness, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea or fainting.

Each year, high temperatures put people at risk. Those most at risk for heat stroke or heat exhaustion are:

- Infants and children younger than 4;
- People 65 or older;
- People who are overweight;
- People who overexert during work or exercise;
- People who are ill or on certain medications.

To prevent heat-related stress:

- Drink plenty of fluids, and avoid alcohol and caffeine, as they can dehydrate you;
- Avoid outdoor activities during the hottest parts of the day;
- Consider wearing a wide-brimmed light hat.



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